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SERVICE

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CHOICE SCHOOL LUNCH

Some Of That, Some Of That And Some Of That. As kids troop back to their junior high and middle schools this Fall, they might have the opportunity to choose some of the foods on their National School Lunch Program plate. Their schools may now permit the children to have the same option that senior high students have enjoyed for a couple of years: the children may take as few as three of the five menu items offered in school lunches. Formerly, the children were required to take all five components of the lunches--milk, bread, meat or meat alternate, and two vegetables or fruits--whether they ate them or not. Purpose of the change, which is required by law, is to reduce food waste in school lunch programs. Of course, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which administers the National School Lunch Program, wants all the children to eat all the school lunch. To help achieve this goal, schools are encouraged to serve nutritious meals that include the kinds of foods that kids like. Students pay the full amount for lunches even though they may choose only three or four of the items. The Federal reimbursement that schools receive for lunches is not affected by the change.

GREEN THUMB INFORMATION

On Indoor Gardening. House plants have become as much a consideration of modern interior decorating as are the right color and furnishings. The wide range of plants that can be successfully grown indoors and the almost unlimited ways they can be displayed can turn any space in a home into a lively, attractive garden--and the home dweller into a creative decorator. Scientists of USDA's Science and Education Administration have put together a wealth of information on how it is done. In a new bulletin, "Indoor Gardening" (G-220) you can learn how to have plants cascading from hanging baskets, moistly enclosed in terrariums, staunchly growing in interestingly-grouped pots, or cosily clustered in artificially-lighted planters--all to the beautification of your home. The booklet describes several types of indoor gardens, illustrates how to build planter boxes and lighting systems, and provides an extensive list of decorative plants, along with a guide to their planting and care. One section advises on how to handle and display special gardens and another advises how to train and condition plants to flourish in new environments. Single free copies of "Indoor Gardening" are available from Publications Division, Office of Governmental and Public Affairs, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.



THE CALL OF THE WILD

Ah! Wilderness. For a growing number of people, "getting away" means heading for the solitude of a wilderness. There are, however, a variety of views on just what a wilderness is. To some people, any wooded area, including the local park, is a wilderness; to others, it is a place far from civilization in the deepest, darkest part of a forest. Even Congress has its own opinion of what a wilderness is. The congressional view is included in the 1964 National Wilderness Preservation Act, which authorizes the designation of national wilderness areas. The Act defines a designated national wilderness as "an area of undeveloped federally-owned land" with some very specific and distinct characteristics. USDA's Forest Service manages such wilderness areas located in national forests. Recently the agency issued a brochure, "Keeping 'Wild' In The Wilderness," that discusses the how's and why's of wilderness management. It tells what activities are and are not permitted and what campers and hikers can and cannot expect to find. For instance, visitors cannot use motorized vehicles or equipment; they will not find readymade campsites, picnic areas, or developed recreational facilities. What they will find is an area where nature prevails and Man is a visitor who does not remain. Single copies of "Keeping 'Wild' In The Wilderness" are available free by writing to the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2417, Washington, D.C. 20013.

FOOD LABELS

Is What You See What You Want To See? It is neither friendly nor practical to open a can or a jar or a bag of food at the supermarket to see what is inside. Even if it were the thing to do, peering into a can of tomato sauce will not tell you what went into it. For information on what a food container contains, we rely on the label. But do labels tell you what you want or need to know? This is the question being put to consumers by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Federal Trade Commission. The three federal agencies, all of which regulate some aspect of food labeling and marketing, have joined in a nationwide campaign to find out what consumers think about all kinds of labels: ingredient labeling, nutritional labeling and labeling for other dietary information; open date labeling; information on food fortification, imitation and substitute foods, and ingredients allowed in standardized foods. Comments can be made in two ways: attend one of the five public hearings being held around the country (Sept. 18-Little Rock, Ark.; Sept. 27-Washington, D.C.; Oct. 12-San Francisco; Oct. 25-Boston; check your local news media for time and location) or send written comments by Nov. 10 to the Hearing Clerk, HFC-18, Food and Drug Administration, Room 4-26, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Md. 20857. A specially prepared booklet, "Food Labeling: We Want Your Comments," summarizes the major issues under consideration. It is available free from supermarkets around the nation; from Dept. 703-F, Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, Colorado 89001; or from Room 1978-S, Food Safety and Quality Service, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. More detailed information on the issues is available from Taylor Quinn, FDA, Bureau of Foods, 200 C Street, SW, Washington, D.C. 20204. With all this opportunity to learn, discuss and comment, let's hear it for food labels.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write Lillie Vincent, Editor of Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Governmental and Public Affairs, Special Reports Division, Rm. 459-A, Washington, DC 20250, or Tel. 202-447-5437.
